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SERVICE DATE – MAY 28, 2002

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

WASHINGTON, DC 20423

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOCKET NO. AB-55 (Sub-No. 615X)

CSX Transportation, Inc. - Discontinuance Exemption - (between east of Memphis and Cordova) in Shelby County, TN

BACKGROUND

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the discontinuance of rail service over a line in Shelby County, Tennessee. The portion of rail line proposed for discontinuance spans 12.24 miles from Milepost ONI 222.9 near Memphis to Milepost ONI 210.66 near Cordova, Tennessee.¹ A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to this report. If the exemption becomes effective, the applicant would be able to discontinue service on the line. The applicant has not requested authorization to abandon the subject rail line. Therefore, salvaging activities, such as the removal of bridges, rails, ties or ballast, would not occur.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE

The rail line is located in western Tennessee and extends from near the City of Memphis east to near Cordova. The width of the right-of-way is 50 feet from the centerline of the track. The property that encompasses the rail line was originally acquired between 1887 and 1895 by the Tennessee Midland Railway, and came under the control of the applicant following an extended series of railroad mergers, acquisitions and consolidations.

Jimmy Whittington Lumber Company (Whittington Lumber), Edmonds Materials, Inc. (Edmonds), and Memphis Light Gas and Water (Memphis Light) are the three current customers on the line. CSXT states that there is no overhead traffic on the line. According to CSXT, the six bridges on the line are in need of substantial repair and replacement, and CSXT must operate over all six

¹A previous CSXT petition to exempt its abandonment of the subject line, plus an additional 1.10 miles, was denied by the Surface Transportation Board on December 12, 2001 in Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 590X), CSX Transportation, Inc. - Abandonment Exemption - (between Memphis and Cordova) in Shelby County, TN.

bridges to serve its customers. Because of the magnitude of deterioration on the first and western-most bridge, and unsafe operating conditions, CSXT embargoed the line on March 1, 2001.

In 1999, CSXT moved 414 carloads of brick and 41 carloads of lumber on the line for its customers. Rail traffic declined to 235 carloads of brick, 39 carloads of lumber, and one carload of transformers in 2000. The rail traffic data for 2001 are incomplete because of the CSXT-imposed embargo. Since the embargo, CSXT states that all three customers, which are located near local highways, have temporarily made extensive use of trucks. If this discontinuance of service becomes effective, CSXT anticipates that Edmonds would continue to move its brick by truck, Whittington Lumber would receive lumber by rail at another facility in Memphis and then ship the material by truck to its Cordova facility, and Memphis Light would move materials by truck as needed.

Land use in the vicinity of the rail line ranges from urban along the western portion of the line to rural along the eastern portion of the line. There are 23 at-grade crossings along the line. The line is not located in a designated coastal management zone. The applicant states that the subject line is not located in any wildlife sanctuary or refuge, or National or state park or forest. In a review of its records, the applicant did not identify any hazardous materials spill sites on the subject line. The applicant states that it does not own structures on the subject line that are 50 years of age or older, and it is not aware of any archeological resources along the rail line.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The applicant submitted an environmental report and historical report that indicate that the quality of the human environment would not be affected significantly as a result of the proposed discontinuance of service.² The applicants served these reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules [49 CFR 1105.7(b)]. We have reviewed and investigated the record in this proceeding.

In its review of the previous filing for abandonment [AB-55 (Sub-No. 590X) or proposed abandonment], the National Geodetic Survey submitted comments indicating that three geodetic station markers may be affected by the proposed abandonment. Abandonment is not requested in the current proceeding. Therefore, the discontinuance of service would not be expected to adversely affect the three station markers.

²In lieu of preparing new or updated environmental documents for this proceeding, CSXT resubmitted the environmental report and historic report that were prepared and filed in AB-55 (Sub-No. 590X). Because these reports are less than one year old, and they encompass the rail line subject to this proceeding, the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) determined that these prior reports would be acceptable for use in this proceeding.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service submitted comments on the proposed discontinuance of service indicating that prime farmland would not be adversely affected.

In its review of the proposed abandonment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that Federally-listed or proposed threatened or endangered species would not be impacted. The discontinuance of service would also not be expected to impact listed or proposed species.

In its review of the proposed abandonment, the Tennessee Department of Conservation, Division of Water Pollution Control (WPC) submitted comments stating that proposed abandonment activities could pollute surface waters and that a stormwater construction permit would be required. Because abandonment and associated land disturbance activities would not occur with a discontinuance of service, adverse impacts to surface waters would not be expected.

In its review of the proposed abandonment, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) submitted comments stating that no Corps permits would be required. Because the placement of dredged material or fill into Waters of the U.S. would also not occur under a discontinuance of service, permits from the Corps would not be required.

In its review of the proposed abandonment, the Tennessee Historical Commission (TN State Historic Preservation Office) concluded that there are no properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Properties that would be affected. Likewise, we have concluded that the discontinuance of service on the subject rail line would not adversely effect historic properties.

Based on CSXT's year 2000 data, approximately 275 carloads of rail traffic could be permanently converted to truck traffic if a discontinuance of service becomes effective. Using a conversion factor of 4 trucks per railcar,³ the Section of Environmental Analysis calculated that on a per day basis, if all rail traffic is diverted to truck traffic, an estimated 5 trucks (10 truck trips) per day would be permanently added to the area roadways during a 240-workday year.⁴ We are assuming an empty backhaul would occur, meaning that approximately 10 trucks per day may be added to area roads. According to CSXT, the customers have access to local highways. Interstates 40 and 240 are accessible from the line, and Interstate 40 parallels the majority of the line.

³The conversion factor is an estimate based on the varied nature of the commodities transported on the subject line.

⁴240 workdays result when weekends and holidays are subtracted from a 365-day year.

CONDITIONS

We recommend no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting discontinuance authority.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, discontinuance of service on the line would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed discontinuance would include denial (and, therefore, no change in operations), or continued operation by another operator. In any of these cases, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to the Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of David Navecky, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 615X) in all correspondence addressed to the Board. Questions regarding this environmental assessment should be referred to David Navecky at 202-565-1593 (naveckyd@stb.dot.gov).**

Date made available to the public: May 28, 2002.

Comment due date: **June 27, 2002**

By the Board, Victoria Rutson, Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Attachment

STATE OF TENNESSEE

RESEARCH DESIGN